

Interstate Compact

SJR 184 (2006)

Report to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems

Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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Executive Summary

As requested in Senate Joint Resolution 184 of the 2006 regular session of the Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) investigated the feasibility and desirability of entering into an interstate compact to construct and operate a controlled access highway or toll facility concept that would traverse the seaboard of the Atlantic coast from Dover, Delaware, to Charleston, South Carolina. Specifically, VDOT sent letters on behalf of Virginia's Secretary of Transportation and Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner to Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina and South Carolina to gauge each state's interest on the highway concept. Additionally, VDOT sent letters to Virginia's Accomack County, Northampton County and Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Organization, to obtain their opinions on the proposed concept. The respective consultations are summarized below.

Delaware

Delaware has actively studied improvements to the US 13 corridor from the City of Milford (North of SR 1) to the Maryland state line. Delaware's response expresses an interest in actively exploring development of a proposed multi-state controlled access highway or toll-way concept. Delaware appears to be the only receptive, interested state respondent: "We recognize the potential value and importance of the concept". Delaware has indicated a few concerns including apparent "inadequate funding for future needs" and, from prior comments documented in the I-99 Construction Report submitted to the Virginia General Assembly in 2006 (House Document 69), concerns regarding the related limited access road SR 1 and the ability to forecast traffic volumes correctly at a regional level.

Virginia

In Virginia, Accomack County informed VDOT that it does not support the proposed controlled access highway concept. Northampton County reported that it opposes the concept because the construction of such a highway is not consistent with the County's plans. Northampton County urges the Commonwealth of Virginia and other states to focus attention on improvements to the existing road systems, including the north-south I-95 corridor. The Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Organization, the entity charged with the transportation planning and programming for the urbanized area in southeastern Virginia, discussed the financial, traffic and environmental concerns, and determined that the proposal is not of high interest, as the region has other priorities.

Maryland

Maryland is committed to upgrading the US 13 corridor in the long term through the use of access control and highway reconstruction, as the corridor remains the most important

north-south corridor on the Eastern Shore. Maryland indicated a willingness to discuss the multi-state concept however it sees no need to enter into an interstate compact to discuss gradual long-term upgrades. A multi-state controlled access or toll-way concept is not a priority of the Maryland State Highway Administration and, given other high-priority and other high-cost projects throughout the state, a major commitment of additional funding is not expected in the US 13 corridor for the foreseeable future.

North Carolina

North Carolina reported that it has not changed its position regarding the proposed I-99 route, which generally would follow the US 17 corridor in North Carolina. The North Carolina vision plan has the entire US 17 corridor eventually brought up to freeway standards as funding opportunities allow. However, North Carolina's funding limitations still control the rate at which projects can be completed. Multi-laning the US 17 corridor is a priority and the level of access control will be determined on a project-by-project basis.

South Carolina

South Carolina was consulted about the concept and provided an opportunity to respond. At the time of the preparation of this document South Carolina is still considering its response.

In prior comments made in the Construction of I-99 Report, South Carolina informed VDOT that with I-73 and several other significant projects planned under an already fully committed federal-aid program, South Carolina was not able to contribute financial resources to support Virginia's proposed concept. South Carolina, however, welcomed the opportunity to coordinate with VDOT and, for support, offered to provide any existing data that they currently maintain.

Findings and Conclusions

The proposal to enter into an interstate compact for the construction and operation of the controlled access highway or toll facility along the Atlantic seaboard corridor, following US Routes 13 and 17, does not appear feasible or desirable.

- The level of response from the majority of the respondent states indicates little interest in cooperatively developing controlled access or toll-way improvements along the proposed corridor. Delaware is the exception, expressing positive interest in actively exploring multi-state development of the proposed controlled access highway or toll-way concept.
- State funding limitations and competing priorities appear to be the greatest obstacles.

- Currently various improvements are being undertaken independently in the multi-state corridor. These actions include developing corridor studies, multi-laning or upgrading certain existing highway sections to full access or partial access control, constructing bypasses, and developing access control / management / corridor preservation plans.
- Currently, key local and regional government entities in Virginia oppose, do not support, or are not interested in the proposed concept.

Recommendation

In consideration of the limited financial resources of the states, the low level of interest in the concept among the majority of states and non-supportive comments expressed by Virginia's Eastern Shore counties and the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Hampton Roads regarding the concept, it is recommended that states move forward with existing plans that consider access management, corridor preservation, and completion of existing projects and/or corridor studies to improve connectivity and level of service along the study corridor. Furthermore, states should continue to focus limited financial resources for capital improvements on priorities in existing state and metropolitan transportation plans and programs.